

VZCZCXRO3780  
PP RUEHDE RUEHDH RUEHDIR  
DE RUEHRH #0959 2031507  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 221507Z JUL 09  
FM AMEMBASSY RIYADH  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1262  
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 2735  
RUEHMS/AMEMBASSY MUSCAT PRIORITY 0027  
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 1398  
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA PRIORITY  
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS RIYADH 000959

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARP (HARRIS)

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TBIO](#) [KFLU](#) [CASC](#) [ASEC](#) [BEXP](#) [SA](#)  
SUBJECT: SAUDI H1N1 UPDATE: UMSRAH RETURNEE DIES IN EGYPT,  
REDUCED TRAVEL BOOKINGS, 294 CASES

REF: CAIRO 1216

¶1. (SBU) The number of H1N1 cases in the Kingdom has risen to 294, and the first fatality was reported on July 19. An Umsrah pilgrim with a pre-existing heart ailment died of H1N1 reportedly after becoming ill while on Umsrah pilgrimage in the Kingdom. The patient, a 25 year old Egyptian woman, reportedly developed flu symptoms on July 11 and did not respond to treatment in Saudi Arabia. Egypt subsequently advised that pregnant women, children, the elderly, and anyone with chronic illnesses should postpone their Hajj and Umsrah pilgrimages. Iran and Oman have issued similar warnings. We have been unable to confirm reports that Tunisia is suspending Umsrah pilgrimages completely. According to press reports, Egypt's top cleric, Sheikh Ali Gomaa, said he would follow World Health Organization (WHO) advice regarding the issuance of a fatwa barring Egyptians from making the pilgrimage (which appears to be a change in position from his previous message reported reftel).

¶2. (SBU) Air traffic from Saudi Arabia to the United States and Europe reportedly dropped due to concerns about the H1N1 outbreak. The BMI country manager told Econoff that bookings on the airline had fallen because of these concerns, noting that Saudis were delaying or canceling travel plans to Europe due to reports of H1N1 infection there. Several airline officials and one travel agency reported a surge in bookings on flights to East Asian countries, which Saudi travelers apparently see as a safer alternative.  
ERDMAN